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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8541

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/IP/RD/SCA, DS/IP/ITA, DS/CC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#)

SUBJECT: ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTEST NEAR AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

¶1. At approximately 1630 hr. local time, August 14, 2008, an anti-government demonstration took place near the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. A group of approximately 3000 protesters reached the Colpetty Junction, approximately 150 meters south of the Embassy's main gate. The protesters from two student groups (the Unemployed Graduates Association and Inter-university Students Federation) were intent on approaching "Temple Trees," an official GSL facility that is located across Galle Road, near the Embassy. The police blocked the Colpetty Junction to prevent the protesters' advance. Demonstrators refused to comply with police commands to disburse and advanced upon the waiting police. Riot police reacted with water cannons and tear gas. Police and rioters engaged in heated confrontations for over one hour. A few thousand protesters disbursed, but a hard-core group of approximately 1000 continued to contest the police until 2045 hr., when they finally retreated.

¶2. Although RSO Colombo reacted the Marines Security Guard Detachment to the Embassy, no Embassy personnel were ever endangered by the protest. Colpetty Junction was closed to traffic at close of business. Embassy personnel, unable to return home by direct routes, were forced to make a circuitous commute to their residences. Wafting tear gas, traffic jams and long commutes were the main problems that the protest caused for Embassy personnel.

¶3. Point of contact for this message is Michael Perkins, RSO, who may be contacted at 94.11.249.8756 or 94.11.249.8888 (MSG Post 1 after regular business hours).
BLAKE